

MANPOWER PLANNING IN THE AGENCY

Introduction

At a recent staff meeting, the Director expressed concern about the state of manpower planning in the Agency. In previous papers, staff officers of the Office of Personnel have expressed similar concerns. Perhaps the time is right to implement improvements.

Definition

"Manpower planning is the process by which an organization insures that it has the right number of people, and the right kind of people, in the right places, at the right time, doing things for which they are economically most useful. It is therefore a two-phased process by which we anticipate the future through manpower projections and then develop and implement manpower action plans and programs to accommodate the implications of the projection."*

The Process in the Agency

Manpower planning in the Agency is an adjunct of a management system, now in some transition, in which the resource management responsibilities were vested in the Deputy Directors with an audit/evaluation function exercised at the senior management level (DCI, DDCI). The major instrument of this planning is the Annual Personnel Plan (APP), which until this year placed its major emphasis on recording performance under the previous year's plans and thus was largely an evaluation document. The 1979 APP is the first to publish

*Patten, Thomas H., Jr., Manpower Planning and the Development of Resources, Wiley, 1971, p. 14.

the planning section (Part I) in advance of the Plan Year, presenting the promotion plans for FY 1979 along with the supporting forecasts of gains and losses. The APP represents bottom-up planning with modest adjustments by the Directorates and some advisory input (such as on feasible promotion levels) from the Office of Personnel. It does not forecast changes in the occupational/skill mix, but another document, the Advance Staffing Plan, does provide an occupational forecast of recruiting needs.

The Personnel Development Plan (PDP) is an important implementing document identifying training and development needs for the current year ^{and the next two years} and recording actions taken in the past year.

Program and Budget submissions, now conforming to the zero-base budgeting approach, identify budget and manpower requirements for the appropriate decision units and resource levels, so manpower requirements for the Program or Budget years, respectively, are established via the budgetary process. This function is exercised through the Comptroller, not the Office of Personnel.

Needs

1. Management involvement. The APP requires more management involvement in the preparation as well as the presentation of its data so that it becomes a more credible management planning document.

2. Time horizon. The Director has expressed concern about identifying sustainable rates of employee input and sustainable promotion flows beyond the one year time horizon of the APP. We currently have no longer range manpower plan. This is not unusual

among Federal agencies, however. The President's Reorganization Project last year noted a prevalent absence of long-term manpower planning and attributed this to the realities of Congressional action on annual budgets, to the disruption of long-term plans. Even so, it would be useful to establish more direct ties between five-year program planning (which is not taken very seriously), manpower projections, annual budgets, and the APP. From a personnel viewpoint, it would help to have advance information about potential expansions or contractions, potential changes in the requisite skill mix, and generally about factors that influence hiring and promotion patterns and levels.

3. Coordination with Agency-level strategic planning. A greater effort in long-term manpower planning cannot be effective without a corresponding effort in Agency-level strategic planning to provide guidance required by all resource planning. This does not assume a top-down type of planning effort but rather an establishment of management perspectives within which planning can take place. The essence of organizational strategic planning, as distinct from political or military planning, is "to use a multi-year time horizon to reassess current strategy by looking for opportunities and threats in the (organization) environment and by analyzing the (organization's) resources to identify its strengths and weaknesses."* At present, the Agency has no staff unit formally designated to conduct such planning.

4. Organization for Manpower Planning. Because manpower planning is closely linked with substantive judgments and program decisions, the components and Directorates should play an active role. This would

*Vancil, Richard F., and Lorange, Peter, in Harvard Business Review, January-February 1975, p. 81.

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require more active participation by component level personnel officers. Each Directorate should have a qualified manpower planning officer to review component level plan, adjust them as necessary, and to monitor the APP and the PDP, including the promotion plans in the APP.

At the Agency level, there is need for a management decision unit concerned with strategic and resource planning and need for the necessary staff support. (The EAG has played a management advisory role but has not focused on longer-term strategic and resource planning in any formal sense.) The support unit for manpower planning could consist of a senior personnel manager (D/Pers or DD/Pers), a senior personnel planning officer (DD/Pers-P&C), and the manpower specialist of the Comptroller's office. The latter would provide an important link coordinating with budget and program planning.

5. Management Improvement Advisory Staff. A comprehensive strategic planning effort would look at the entire management system, including personnel management, to identify strong points and points needing improvement. In the past, efforts to use management staffs to effect involuntary improvement have often failed to secure the cooperation of the "clients". More recently, advisory management staffs, such as a current effort in HUD, has^{ve} obtained more success in obtaining the cooperation of their clients.

6. Manpower planning skills. A strong effort to upgrade manpower planning would require more knowledge of the relevant planning concepts and techniques among the personnel officers in the components and the Directorates and within the senior staffs supporting Agency-level planning. We should make a conscious effort to develop skills in

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planning, modeling, using the data base, dealing with decisions in the presence of uncertainty, and organizational development. We should also explore the experience of other agencies to learn from their successes or failures.

7. Inventories of skills/qualifications/targeting. The link between quantitative manpower planning and qualitative developmental plans is determining the changing requirement for skills beyond the present mix. In corporations, this drives an important element of human resource planning. In the Agency, this is an underdeveloped effort. To inventory qualifications, it is necessary to know for each employee: occupation, additional skills and qualifications possessed, if possible--the current level of skill or qualification (to sort out skills learned years ago and now forgotten). The qualifications record system of the Agency does not record in most cases, except for languages or certain certifiable skills, the current achievement level. The present record system also contains data gaps in those many instances where update information has not been submitted.

Recent inventories by the Comptroller and later by NFAC have demonstrated the potential usefulness of target and subdiscipline information. For example, is an "economist" studying the Soviet economy or international trade? Such information is divulged in the regular personnel data system only if an organizational designator is sufficiently and accurately descriptive.

Heightened interest in manpower planning might extend to qualifications and targeting planning, in which case an improved qualifications/

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targeting reporting system would be required.

Recommendations (for discussion only, not approval at this time)

It is recommended that:

1. The DDCI direct a study of the possible desirability of a more formal approach to strategic organizational and resource planning in the Agency.
2. In the interim, a manpower planning committee of the EAG be appointed to consist of the D/Pers (who would attend EAG and Comptroller meetings), the DD/Pers/Plans and Control, and a manpower specialist designated by the Comptroller.
3. A manpower planning officer be designated to serve in the office of each Deputy Director.
4. OTR establish, assisted by Office of Personnel, a training program in manpower planning skills for Directorate and component level personnel officers.
5. D/Pers recommend steps to upgrade the data base on qualifications and, possibly, targeting, with requirement inputs from the Comptroller and Deputy Directors.
6. D/Pers discuss with the Comptroller measures to improve longer-term planning for resources, including manpower.

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62 Models of Manpower Planning

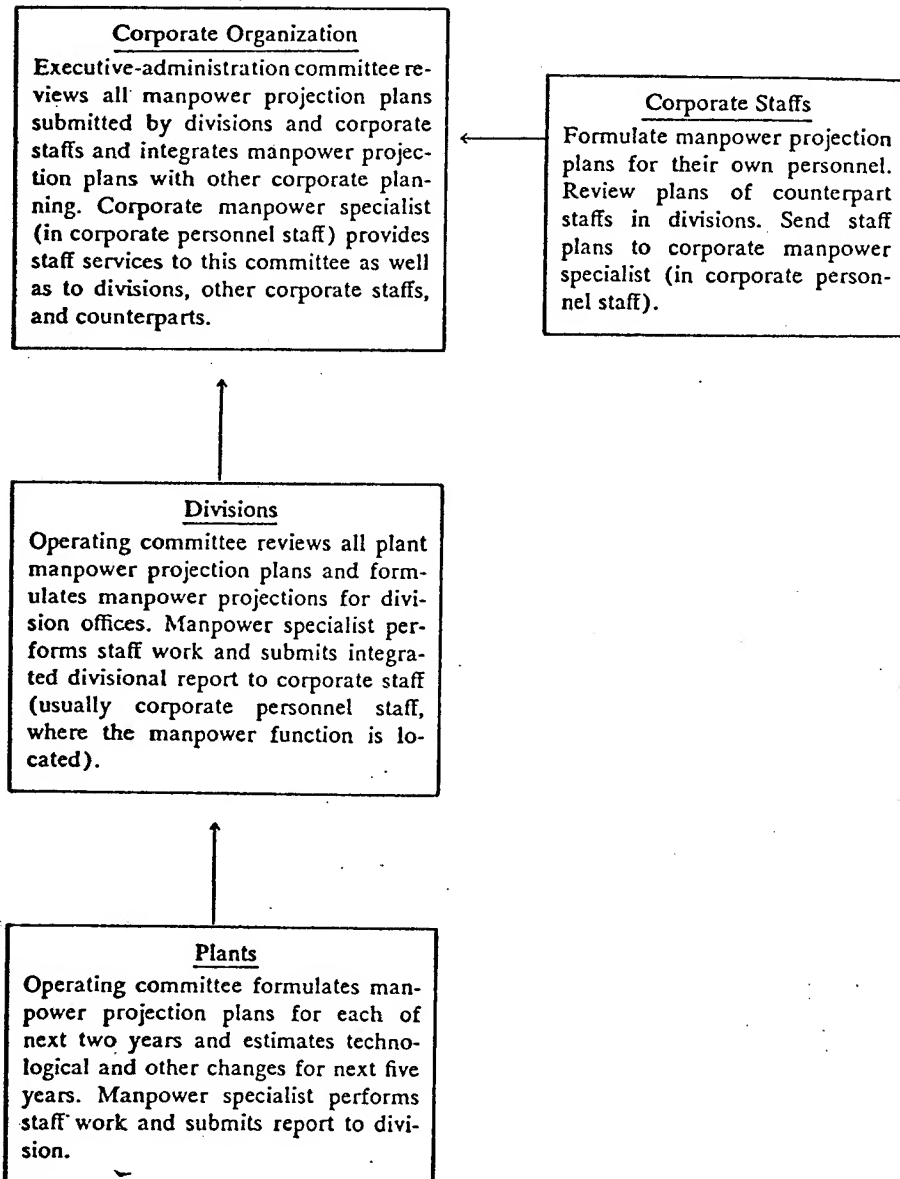


Figure 2 Flow chart of manpower planning system in a complex organization.